

20,000 children won't be forgotten this year

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP) — Some 20,000 children of prisoners will receive Christmas gifts this year through an outreach program to be conducted in 200 U.S. cities. The national program, Project Angel Tree, is coordinated by Prison Fellowship Ministries.

A number of Mississippi Baptist churches are participating.

Prison Fellowship volunteers investigate the needs of families of prisoners with whom they have contact. Christmas trees are set up in shopping malls, banks, churches, and other public locations, with the names and gift wishes of the children of prisoners listed on paper "angels." Shoppers then select an angel and purchase gifts, which are later distributed to families.

The program began in Birmingham, Ala., three years ago, with just one tree in a suburban shopping mall. Last year the project had grown to 57 cities, with nearly 10,000 children receiving gifts.

"Due to family separation and economic hardship, Christmas for the children of prisoners can be a lonely and empty day. In a sense, these children are some of the saddest victims of crime in our society," said former presidential aide Charles W. Colson, now chairman of Prison Fellowship.

"We're hoping to make Christmas a bit brighter for these children," said Colson. "It's at the very heart of what we celebrate at Christmas to honor the Christ child by helping forgotten children today."

Mississippi Foundation marks million dollar gift

Long range estate planning on the part of the late John Wilbanks of Corinth has led to the first million dollar gift to the Mississippi Baptist Foundation. Half of the earnings will go to the Foreign Mission Board.

When Wilbanks, a Baptist layman and member of Kendrick Baptist Church, died in 1978, he left shares of stock from the National Bank of Commerce, of which he had been board chairman, to the Foundation.

This fund was established with the Foundation in 1981 and through the intervening years, in consultation with Mrs. Gertrude Rogers Wilbanks, the widow; and her financial advisors, the investment committee of the Mississippi Baptist Foundation's

trustees retained the stock.

However, a recent offer to purchase the shares owned by the Foundation was accepted, bringing to the trust approximately \$1,023,500. Foundation Executive Secretary Harold Kitchings reported this is the largest amount ever realized by the Foundation which exists to aid people in estate planning, primarily those interested in carrying on missions and Christian education endeavors after their deaths.

The Foreign Mission Board will receive 50 percent of the interest which will be earned on the principal, 25 percent to Kendrick Church, and the rest to be divided between Mrs. Wilbanks' home church and her present church, Kossuth United Methodist, and First United Methodist of Corinth, respectively.

Wilbanks, who was 78 when he died, had been vice president of the National Bank of Commerce in Corinth prior to becoming chairman. He had served eight years each as circuit and chancery clerk, and he was a former trustee of Blue Mountain College.

He was one of the founders and a builder of Kendrick Church, along with the pastorium there and served on the advisory committee of the Baptist Student Union at Northeast Mississippi Junior College. Wilbanks was, along with his wife, a state leader in the Masons, each holding the highest office in the state.

Mrs. Wilbanks, a retired schoolteacher, said her husband "most sincerely trusted" the Baptist Foundation.



Mrs. Wilbanks

Baptists shelter homeless as floods soak Buenos Aires

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (BP) — Flood waters continued to rise Nov. 21 as Baptists fed and sheltered families driven from their homes in what some Argentine officials are calling the worst flooding in the history of Buenos Aires province.

"About 22,000 people are officially

evacuated," said Southern Baptist missionary Sarah Wilson, who's assisting in the ministry of flood victims. "That means probably about twice that number evacuated on their own. We have five different Baptist centers (in the city of Buenos Aires)

(Continued on page 4)

The Baptist Record

Peace Committee plans to visit SBC agencies

By Dan Martin

ATLANTA (BP) — Five subcommittees of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee will visit 11 of the 20 national SBC agencies during the next two months as part of the effort to reconcile the controversy in the 14.4-million member denomination.

The subcommittees, each composed of four members, were appointed during the Dec. 10-11 meeting of the committee in Atlanta. They are expected to make the visits in January and February and to report to the whole committee during meetings in January and February.

Committee Chairman Charles Fuller, pastor of First Church, Roanoke, Va., said the purpose of the subcommittees is "neither a whitewash nor an inquisition. I think the committee is genuinely trying to avoid those extremes."

Fuller added the instructions to the subcommittees are that they "go in the spirit of love and candor and with the major purpose being to sensitize agencies to convention concerns and to solicit their active participation with us in the peace making process."

"The subcommittees will state at the outset that the purpose is not to accuse but to express concerns which committee members have and which have been conveyed to the committee by Southern Baptists in general. The purpose is to establish honest dialogue and communication."

"Agencies shall be given an opportunity to express their concerns and shall also be encouraged to express what they perceive to be the greatest needs to restoration of trust in SBC life," he added.

The subcommittees — three of which will visit two seminaries each, one to visit Nashville-based agencies and the last to visit the two mission boards — will meet with the chief administrative officer, the chairman of the trustees, and, in the case of the seminaries, the chief academic officer.

Informal guidelines given to the subcommittees indicate any "faculty member or agency employee whose name enters into the discussion" may appear before the subcommittee or present a written statement if he or she wishes.

Fuller said the 11 agencies to be visited have been specifically mentioned in at least one of the more than 200 letters received by the committee.

The committees and their assignments (chairman listed first):

Midwestern and Golden Gate seminaries — Harmon Born, Atlanta; William Hull, Shreveport, La.; Daniel

Vestal, Midland, Texas; and Ed Young, Houston.

Southern and New Orleans seminaries — William Crews, Riverside, Calif.; Adrian Rogers, Memphis, Tenn.; Winfred Moore, Amarillo, Texas; and Cecil Sherman, Fort Worth, Texas.

Southeastern and Southwestern seminaries — Jim Henry, Orlando, Fla.; Robert E. Cuttino, Lancaster, S.C.; William Poe, Charlotte, N.C.; and Jerry Vines, Jacksonville, Fla.

Sunday School Board, Christian Life Commission and Historical Commission — Ray Roberts, Asheville, N.C.; Doyle Carlton, Wauchula, Fla.; Christine Gregory, Danville, Va.; and SBC President Charles F. Stanley, Atlanta.

Foreign and Home Mission Boards — Albert McClellan, Nashville, Tenn.; Jodi Chapman, Wichita Falls, Texas; Herschel H. Hobbs, Oklahoma City; and John Sullivan, Shreveport, La.

Chairman Fuller and Vice-Chairman Charles Pickering of Laurel, Miss., will not join the visitation teams, but will be available to fill in, if necessary, Fuller said.

Fuller told Baptist Press he had contacted each of the agency executives prior to proposing the visitation subcommittees to the committee, and said each "was positive, favorable, and supportive of the idea. Several of them had certain questions mainly in regard to procedure, but in no case did I encounter anyone who felt the idea was improper or wrong."

He added a representative of the seminary presidents had telephoned following a workshop conducted for the heads of the six seminaries. "He told me the presidents had reiterated their support, cooperation, and willingness. He added the seminaries did not desire to sidestep anything, but to deal with everything the committee wants to ask."

Fuller described the third meeting of the 22-member committee as being "one primarily concerned with implementation (of our SBC-assigned task). The first meeting was typified by organization and identification. The second moved from identification to confrontation and the third meeting moved from confrontation to some implementation."

The chairman said the meeting — which was attended by all members — had a "quality spirit. The diversity is there; the confrontation is there; the depth of feeling is there, but I really believe there is respect for each other. Even though there may be disagreement, there is not a deterioration of the confrontation."

He added he also is pleased with the progress the committee is making, although it may appear to be slow to some outside the structure. "There may be some who say we are not moving fast enough," he said. "But that is not being said by those who have the responsibility for carrying out this responsibility. I think we (the committee) see the value in becoming a group, and that does take time," he said.

In addition to establishing the visitation subcommittees, the committee also:

— Allowed a representative from Baptist Press, the SBC news service, to attend the meeting. BP also has been invited to attend the January meeting in Dallas.

— Heard a devotional by Fuller, in which the chairman emphasized that the "biblical approach to reconciliation is that the Christian takes the initiative when he feels the other party is the offender" and once again encouraged Peace Committee members to "set an example by keeping the inflammatory profile of the controversy low."

— Heard four members — Vines, Carlton, Born, and Hull — discuss the items which bind the Southern Baptist Convention together. Mentioned were autonomy of the local church, an "absolute belief in one God," the centrality of the Scriptures in Baptist theology, a passion for freedom, and voluntary cooperation.

— Established a schedule for meetings leading up to the 1986 annual meeting of the SBC, June 10-12, in Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta. The committee will meet Jan. 20-21 in Dallas; Feb. 24-25, in Atlanta; April 3-4 in Dallas and again May 13-14 in Atlanta. Fuller said committee members felt rotating meetings between Dallas and Atlanta, rather than going to Nashville, simplified travel arrangements.

Dan Martin is BP news editor.

No Record next week

No Baptist Record will be published next week. The postal contract calls for 50 issues a year, omitting the week of July 4 and Christmas. The next issue will be dated Jan. 2, 1986. The staff wishes all a merry Christmas.

"Donor fatigue" possible during Ethiopian crisis

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (BP) — Transportation problems and lean crops will add at least another year to Southern Baptist short-term relief efforts in Ethiopia, according to missionaries.

Missionaries urge Southern Baptists to continue prayer and financial support for efforts to shore up the transportation and supply system necessary to keep feeding programs operating.

Feeding and health care centers operated by missionaries and volunteers in the Ethiopian highlands need reliable sources of grain and continued access to a helicopter or airplanes to stabilize the difficult transportation system.

Rains, which partially broke Ethiopia's drought, produced only enough harvest to feed the people for two to four months. Thus, the feeding and health care centers will need to remain open through at least 1986. Southern Baptists operate five such centers in Ethiopia's Menz-Gishe and Merhabete districts and may be asked by the government to open two more.

That, along with plans for long-range development, will call for at least a dozen more volunteer nurses and perhaps a career missionary physician, as well as another career veterinarian and another career agriculturist.

Aware that one harvest can't cure 11 years of famine, Ethiopian officials project nearly six million Ethiopians will need relief throughout 1986. That calls for mobilization and distribution of nearly 1.2 million metric tons of grain, supplementary food and oil.

Southern Baptist missionaries need 19,000 metric tons of grain, plus supplementary food and oil, in 1986 to supply their centers and feed about 170,000 of those people per month.

"We can reasonably expect from current sources only about one-half of our total annual requirement," said Ed Mason, volunteer from Florida,

who coordinates relief efforts for the Baptist Mission of Ethiopia. Mennonites donated 1,720 metric tons of grain to keep the centers supplied through December and have promised 5,000 to 8,000 metric tons in 1986 if Southern Baptists can handle inland shipping costs.

The Foreign Mission Board is exploring ways to get access to additional grain and improve transportation for grain already in the country but log jammed by lack of trucks, according to John Cheyne, the Foreign Mission Board's senior human needs consultant.

Missionaries report they could put a helicopter or airplane to work right away, since funding apparently is running out on a helicopter on loan from the "100 Huntley Street" religious program in Canada and only part-time airplane transportation service is available from another religious organization.

Aware continued needs in Ethiopia may create "donor fatigue" in the United States, Mason pointed out. "The Ethiopian famine is far from over. To stop now would be to regress to one year ago when we first started. The caring and giving must continue to protect the investment already made in these people."

"Because Christians cared and prayed we have made a dramatic impact in the lives of children and adults here. The investment has been worthwhile. We've won victories and saved lives. We must not stop the short-term efforts now."

Meanwhile, missionaries continue to negotiate with the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture to design a long-range developmental plan. They also have cooperated with an Italian immunization team, and received drug shipments from the Foreign Mission Board to battle a typhus outbreak.

Career missionary physician David Sorley of Uganda will visit Ethiopia to recommend ways to maintain the

health of missionary and volunteer staff who have encountered health problems while involved in relief efforts in remote areas.

Itawamba student work is expanding

The Baptist Student Center at Itawamba Junior College is getting ready to knock out a wall to expand. It needs to in order to provide space for the many activities that take place there.

In addition to the regular weekly noonday services which draws 50-60 students, with lunches provided by local Baptist women's groups, there is a puppet and drama team, and a music ensemble (Turning Point) which all need practice space.

The student visit a local nursing home monthly, and have just begun a monthly visit to a local children's home to play with the children and get to know them.

Their BSU director is Wayne Vandiver. "I felt called directly to be a BSU director," said Vandiver who answered that call while a student at Northeast.

Vandiver, who estimates that about 75 students will be involved in this year's program, is planning to lead several mission trips this year. They will be going on their second annual witnessing trip to Daytona Beach during spring break. And they will go in May on an assignment from the Home Mission Board. Last year they were sent to work in inner city Houston, Tex., with missionary Mildred McWhorter, along with three other Mississippi BSUs.

Recently, Itawamba, Northeast, and Blue Mountain BSUs traveled to Tupelo to lead in a special program for the two year olds through sixth graders while their parents held a Christmas banquet. The assignment was to do much more than simply babysit. The Itawamba group prepared Church Training lessons, took their puppet-drama group; the Blue Mountain group took its clown troupe, and Northeast took care of the two year olds.

Take a break from your problems! I recently heard a highly respected and successful businessman give that advice to a large audience. This man stated that he made a strong effort to set aside some time each day when he refused to think about the problems he faced. He spent the time reading, talking with associates—but not about their problems or his—or doing almost anything except thinking or worrying about problems. He considered this little time-out period as an important ingredient in his success as a businessman. I buy that theory, but putting the theory into practice is not as simple as it sounds. I've tried it and it can be done but you have to work at it.—DICK HANSON.

Rebuilding at Water Valley Church complete

On April 21, 1984, a killer tornado swept through the town of Water Valley, taking the lives of seven people and destroying hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of property.

Directly in the path of this tornado, were the buildings of the First Baptist Church. The winds did great damage to the 550 capacity auditorium and completely destroyed the two educational buildings behind it.

Restoration of the auditorium was completed in time for the church to have her Christmas services in its last year. Architectural drawings, bid letting and construction has taken 19 months to complete.

During this period the educational organizations have met in various buildings made available by the business and professional sector in addition to one building owned by the church that was hastily repaired.

On Dec. 8, 1985, the church returned to this new facility. Plans are that in the very near future the church will have a dedication service and open house with a homecoming theme. 1985 is also the 125th anniversary of



the church's constitution.

The church had a good insurance program at the time of this tragedy and has spent over two million dollars in replacing their buses, restoring the auditorium and rebuilding the educational facilities. "We have rebuilt, restored, and added new equipment and new facilities and remained debt free in the process," said Guy Reedy, pastor.

Calhouns' deaths still their active church work

Geraldine Calhoun was to sing a solo Dec. 22 in the Christmas cantata at Puckett Baptist Church entitled "How Can It Be?" Instead, she and her husband John Earl were buried last Sunday following their slaying by an apparent burglar. A suspect has been arrested.

The Calhouns, according to their pastor Alvin Doyle, were completely involved in the life of their church. John Earl was a deacon, former Sunday School superintendent, both taught Church Training for 7th-9th graders, and both had led several youth trips. This year they took the youths on a camping trip and last year on a choir tour to Gatlinburg.

And both sang in the church choir.

Geraldine, active in Woman's Missionary Union, was a sponsor of a Christmas crafts show to raise money for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions.

The couple took children from the Baptist Children's Village home during the Christmas season and she, a beautician, would go to the Village to cut the children's hair for free.

The couple's two children, Chris, 16, and Jared, 13, are staying with relatives. They had gone to school when the murders occurred.

The 300 seat church took in more than 600 for the funeral.

Baptists shelter homeless as floods soak Buenos Aires

(Continued from page 3)

serving as a place to receive the people. They're sleeping overnight and being fed."


Wilson, from Mt. Holly, N.C.; Southern Baptist disaster relief coordinator Charolette (correct spelling) Rock, from Barbourville, Ky.; and Argentine Baptists are working in cooperation with provincial civil defense forces, who are handling evacuation efforts. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board sent \$5,000 in hunger relief funds Nov. 21 to buy food for homeless families crowding into the Baptist centers. The board sent \$10,000 earlier in the month to pay for mattresses, blankets and roofing for victims of earlier flooding.

"After we get more definite facts, we'll probably ask for some more (money)," Wilson said. "Civil defense

has been giving food pretty well up until now, but they're running out." She added that students from International Baptist Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires also are bringing food and clothing to the shelters.

Wilson said 13 people had been killed so far by the latest flooding, which was caused by weeks of heavy rains in Buenos Aires province. Areas west of the capital city of Buenos Aires have suffered especially heavy damage. Water has submerged houses in some areas, and one town was "completely eliminated," Wilson said. Western and southern suburbs of the capital itself also have sustained heavy damage.

Earlier news reports said rains had flooded at least 10 million acres of land in Buenos Aires province, with property and crop damage estimated at \$1 billion.



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Apartheid protest breeds intolerance in reverse

By Robert O'Brien

Editor's Note: This story is based on interviews with black Baptists who live in South Africa's riot-torn black townships. Names have been changed or omitted or interviews combined to protect individuals.

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (BP) — Quietly huddled in their small house, Nehemiah and his family listened in the darkness as radical blacks, angry over South Africa's apartheid system, vented their hostilities on them.

"We will burn! We will burn!" they chanted defiantly outside the home as the stench of broken sewers and uncollected garbage mingled with their bitter rage in the black township on the city's outskirts.

"Black Christians are sacred," explained one black Baptist. "We don't know where to stand as Christians because Christians take widely different views of how church should confront state and how to interpret the Bible." Said Nehemiah, a black Baptist pastor who refused to discontinue services or allow use of church property for political rallies: "We live in a hell-on-earth situation which doesn't permit neutrality of different methods."

"Refusal brings threats to burn your home, destroy your church, kill you," Nehemiah said. "That forces many blacks to join protests. Agreement with demands violates the law and brings the wrath of police. But we must stand firm, not just because of the law but because we believe the word of God is more powerful than violence and that the way to peace doesn't come through murder and

destruction by people of any race."

Nehemiah will never forget the night he and his family faced death, a danger that never really goes away. "I vowed I would die rather than give in to the mob," Nehemiah recalled. "I was convinced we would die that night. But we took our stand, prepared to accept God's will."

Vividly aware of each other's fear, they prayed for protection and then began to sing biblical choruses as the mob's fury grew. Gradually, their fear decreased, and they seemed to move from a hurricane of emotion into a peace that defied explanation. Then hope entered the hurricane's eye. An inner voice seemed to say, "I will protect you." Miraculously, the angry mob dissipated, leaving them alone, at least for awhile.

As calm came, it also eased Nehemiah's memory of another black mob burning a black girl (denounced as a collaborator) to death. No one knew that for sure. Something as simple as buying groceries from a white store or helping families of black policemen whom radicals burned out has brought such denunciations.

Nehemiah will never forget standing by, helpless and horrified, as the girl died, praying God would spare her. The mob, knocking her down every time she got up, threatened to burn out and kill anyone who tried to help. "By their logic, the radicals think we're weak," Nehemiah said. "They can't understand non-violence because their bitterness runs deep. They've waited so long for justice I can understand why talk of peace angers them."

Nehemiah and others understand the pain brought on by apartheid and don't feel they have the only valid approach to protest. They're thankful the Baptist Union of Southern Africa strongly urged the government to abolish apartheid and give equal rights and representation to all races. "We also hate apartheid," one said. "Even though we disagree with our brothers' methods, we love them and hope others will have patience as they deal with their grief."

Black Baptist observers say many other factors besides anger at apartheid are at work; that it's more than just a civil rights movement and defies the world's simplistic solutions.

For example, longtime observers say many protesters have become part of a Communist effort to use anti-apartheid sentiment to overthrow South Africa. Some minimize that threat, but observers see in South Africa the same earmarks — methods, slogans, arms — present when such neighbors as Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia fell to Marxist revolution.

Another factor involves tribalism and political fragmentation into language and tribal groups. A good bit of the killing in South Africa boils down to black killing black in tribal — political strife, a phenomenon of black African culture reminiscent of American Indian tribal warfare.

In fact, many blacks harbor so much anger they want apartheid in reverse and rule by blacks at the expense of millions of whites, Indians (Asians) and "coloreds" (persons of mixed race) in South Africa. Black Baptist leaders and others say that mustn't happen because the whole economic and political stability of southern Africa's countries depends on a strong South Africa, which shores up the entire region's economy.

The black leaders don't believe facing up to unpleasant or unpopular truths should be used either to stereotype them as "black on the outside but white on the inside" ("Uncle Toms" or "Oreos") or to excuse white brutality or apartheid. "Apartheid has dehumanized all races, including whites," one black leader said. "Our country has reaped violence by creating barriers. It helped create the latest violence last year when 'coloreds' and Indians were given a minor voice in government — but not blacks." "Coloreds" and Indians, on the other hand, protest their minor role and represent another complex factor in the whole complex situation.

Baptists across the racial spectrum say they detest the thinking of many white Afrikaaners who put apartheid and its 361 laws on the books beginning in 1948. But they understand Afrikaaners' fear of extermination by surrounding black states.

Black Baptist leaders say they pray other blacks will learn by their own treatment not to seek revenge but to work for justice for all races. They also hope the world will try to understand their dilemma and avoid simplistic solutions for a complex situation.

O'Brien writes for FMB.

Marks, Shelton youth evangelism meet leaders

Kenny Marks and Joe Shelton are among program leaders for the 1985 Mississippi Baptist youth Evangelism Conference, Dec. 30-31 at the Mississippi College Coliseum in Clinton.

Marks is a performer of contemporary Christian music. A portion of his year is spent with the Billy Graham organization's pre-crucade youth concert activities.

Shelton, a resident of Tupelo, is a former rock and roll musician who

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Marks

Shelton

has become a Christian, using music, singing and humor to communicate with young people.

Registration at the door begins at 1 p.m., Dec. 30. The program begins at 2 p.m. and concludes at 3:30 the next day.

Larry Black to be leader at music SYMPOSIUM '86

NEW ORLEANS — Times of worship, exploration of current training methods, techniques of handbell utilization, reading sessions to review new music, and study of music program administration in the local church are among opportunities to be provided as part of SYMPOSIUM '86 at New Orleans Seminary, Jan. 6-9, 1986. Larry Black, minister of music at First Church, Jackson, will be a guest clinician.

The four-day conference will provide opportunities for staff and lay church musicians to explore a variety of topics related to operation of a effective music ministry program in the local church.

The symposium clinicians include: Donald Neuen, professor of conducting and choral activities at Eastman School of Music; Don Collins, professor of music at the University of Central Arkansas, and an expert in the changing adolescent voice; L. Campbell Bunting, director of handbells for Schulerich Carillons; Bob Burroughs, composer and minister of music at Peachtree Baptist Church in Atlanta, Ga.; Grace Nash, author, producer, publisher and director of Orff, Kodaly Master's Certification Program at Northern Arizona University; and Mark Short, associate professor of church administration at New Orleans Seminary.

The worship celebrations will feature presentations by the college and youth choirs and orchestra from First Baptist Church in Jackson, Miss.; the sanctuary choir of Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala.; the young adult ensemble from First Baptist Church in Picayune, Miss.; and ensembles from New Orleans Seminary.

Registration fee is \$60 - \$30 for students. For more information, contact the division of church music ministries, New Orleans Seminary, 3939 Gentilly Blvd., New Orleans, La. 70126-4858.

Garaywa summer jobs available

Applications are now being accepted for summer employment at Camp Garaywa near Clinton.

Each summer Woman's Missionary Union employs female college and seminary students to serve as counselors for the state's 2,000 plus GA and Acteen campers.

The qualifications of a Camp Garaywa Summer staffer include: a committed Christian and an active member of a Southern Baptist Church; at least one year of college completed; an understanding of the purpose of the GA and Acteen organizations; a desire to learn and teach missions; willing to put others before self; patience and love for children.

Completed application forms should be mailed to the WMU office by Jan. 31. Forms may be secured from the state WMU office, director of missions, and BSU directors.

New Orleans sets interterm

The annual two-week interterm program at New Orleans Seminary is scheduled Jan. 7-17, 1986, and will include 14 courses. Courses will be offered at the associate, master, and doctoral degree level. Two courses will be offered as part of the night track program; night track classes will meet Jan. 6-17.

Degree programs at New Orleans Seminary are fully accredited. For more information, contact Bart C. Neal, Registrar, New Orleans Seminary, 3939 Gentilly Blvd., New Orleans, La. 70126-4858.

Adrian Rogers confirms, "praying about it"

By Al Shackleford

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP) — Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., has confirmed a Dec. 2 meeting in Atlanta with conservative leaders who asked him to be a candidate for the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1986.

Rogers was elected SBC president in 1979, but declined nomination in 1980 for a second one-year term because of pressing church and personal responsibilities.

"I certainly have not decided to run and certainly have not encouraged anybody to support me as SBC president," Rogers told the Tennessee Baptist and Reflector Dec. 9. "I am praying about it," the Memphis pastor added.

Rogers said he met with 18 other conservative leaders in Atlanta Dec. 2 and "the consensus was I should run," he stated. "When these friends met, they seemed to have a spirit of unanimity and asked me if I would be willing to be nominated again for president."

Rogers said he felt the group asked him to be a candidate because the "moderate wing already has a candidate with a face and a name," ex-

plaining that "from all the straws in the wind, it appears that Winfred Moore will be a candidate."

Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church, Amarillo, Tex., was elected first vice-president of the SBC in Dallas last June, after being defeated by Charles Stanley for the SBC presidency.

Emphasizing he has not given anyone permission to nominate him at this point, Rogers stressed he is not seeking the SBC presidency, as he did not seek it in 1979.

Rogers said it was a "tremendously difficult decision," noting that Bellevue Baptist Church is "in the midst of a tremendous program of relocating the church" from the downtown area to a tract in west Memphis.

The former SBC president said a number of people and pastors across the convention had urged him to allow his name to be placed in nomination at the 1986 SBC in Atlanta June 10-12. "I am committed to seeing our convention take a conservative course," Rogers said.

Al Shackleford edits the Baptist and Reflector.

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Letters to the Editor

The Stryper story

Editor:

In the Nov. 14 issue of the *Baptist Record*, you stated that you would not print any more letters concerning Christian Rock, a move that was long overdue. However, the following week, (Nov. 21), after the announced ban on Christian Rock letters, you printed, as a front page "news" item, an inaccurate and controversial article on the aforementioned taboo subject.

The article in question, "Band wants image minus the sin," is not news, but, rather, an editorial concerning the Christian rock group, Stryper. Its intent — to slam them and Christian rock performers by proxy. The lead in sentence immediately clued me in with the sensational statement that they throw things at the audiences but fails to mention that it is Bibles that are tossed. It also includes quotes that sound like they have been extracted to prove some particular point rather than giving the group a fair representation of what their aim or goal is.

I have heard Stryper's music and do not particularly care for it. However, from things that I have read concerning the group, they are certainly ministry minded. They are known for personally answering letters from their listeners concerning problems and even phoning people if they think the problem that the letter writer expresses is serious enough. I also know that they offer invitations at the end of their concerts (something that few other Christian artists do, contemporary or mainline), and there are professions of faith made. I think that they, along with all of the readers of the *Baptist Record*, have been treated unfairly, because neither Stryper nor your subscribers are given opportunity to respond.

I noticed that the article carried the designation of "EP" which I assume means Evangelical Press. Therefore,

I can only guess that the reason that it was included in the *Baptist Record*, and on the front page at that, is that the editor is trying to prove some kind of point of his own without having to take the responsibility of a possible rebuttal.

Arnold L. Chavers
Crosby, MS.

I believe you may be right. Very likely it would have been better not to have run the story on Stryper in light of all the controversy following the Christian rock concert at Youth Night. Your letter, however, is in order because we did run the story.

I believe there are two concepts that need to be understood.

First, being on Page 1 is not the plum it might seem to be. So much of our circulation is with those churches using the front page for their mailouts that we never put anything that is critical on that page. We try to make it interesting but not mandatory.

Second, I believe you misread the story on Stryper. The intent of the story, it seems to me, is to point out that regardless of their music, their dress, and their actions, their intent, according to their own evaluation, is to minister. Perhaps we fail from time to time, but we would never intentionally use a news story to make an editorial comment. If such is to be made in news items, it must be attributed to someone. This was the case with the Stryper story as one of the group, Robert Sweet, was quoted as saying, "We're just trying to reach people in a positive way." — Editor

The price of liberty

We, Robert S. and Julie J. Crowder, wish to announce that under date of Dec. 5, 1985, a civil action was filed in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division. The style of the action is Robert S. Crowder, Julie J. Crowder, and Henry C. Cooper, Plain-

tiffs, vs. Southern Baptist Convention, and Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, Defendants. It is Civil Action No. C85-4582A. Attorney for the Plaintiffs is Emmet J. Bondurant of the firm of Bondurant, Mixson and Elmore of Atlanta.

We are members of Southside Baptist Church of Birmingham, Alabama. Mr. Cooper is a member of the First Baptist Church of Windsor, Missouri.

We must emphasize that this is an Administrative matter. It is not doctrinal and not theological. It does not deal with any belief Baptists hold about the Bible. It is strictly about the violation of the Bylaws that govern the selection of leaders, and about insuring that messengers can have an input into the selection of those leaders.

We feel our stewardship includes:

(a) Giving to our church and through it to the SBC causes;

(b) Being sure that the leaders who administer the vast SBC income are chosen in the democratic manner and with the safeguards built into the SBC Bylaws, and that this choice is untrammelled.

Thomas Jefferson said the "Price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance." This suit is that vigilance after those in authority failed to provide the vigilance.

Robert S. and Julie J. Crowder
Birmingham, Ala.

Seminary history

Editor:

My grandfather, Rev. S. F. Marsh, taught in the Mississippi Baptist Seminary Centers from 1949 until 1958, retiring when he was 78 years old. In 1948 after being an active pastor in Texas churches for 40 years, he and my grandmother came to make their home in Leland, Miss., near my family, but at 69 he was active in the First Baptist Church in Leland and was often a supply ministry in nearby churches.

(Continued on page 9)

Baptists enlarge witness as Colombians ask 'why?'

By Art Toalston

IBAGUE, Colombia (BP) — The questions are inevitable when 25,000 to 40,000 people are killed after a volcano erupts: "Why us? Why, God?"

In countries where Roman Catholicism is prevalent, "people recognize the hand of God in things," said Southern Baptist missionary Dan Rupp. Colombia's Catholic bishops urged the nation to return to God after the Nov. 13 eruption and deadly mudslide which left a death toll roughly equal to the thousands of injured and homeless.

The bishops also cited the 28-hour shootout at the Palace of Justice in Bogota, Nov. 6-7. About 100 people were killed as the army and national police regained control of the building seized by leftist guerrillas.

"What sin are we paying for?" a newscaster asked over a Bogota TV station.

In the rural village of Guayabal, not far from Armero, an elderly Pentecostal pastor told of "the judgment of God for the sins of the people" as he visited with Southern Baptist missionaries Larry Booth and Howard Atkinson.

Christians cope better than non-Christians in tragic times, said Rupp, of Bogota. "They realize how God can work through the tragedies."

"Certainly history shows that people respond in a quest for faith, a desire to know God, in the wake of disasters," said Booth, also in Bogota.

Jose Zabala, pastor of First Baptist Church, Ibague, the closest Baptist congregation to Armero, has told his members, "Life has two sides. There is the good side, happiness and

satisfaction. There's the other side, sadness, pain, tragedy."

The Armero crisis has stirred Zabala to do more teaching on "spiritual resources" so First Baptist members "won't be caught so off guard they won't know what to do as believers . . . in whatever kinds of circumstances come to them."

For Southern Baptist missionaries, the crisis has underscored the importance of disaster relief preparedness.

Southern Baptist relief funds allow Baptists to respond quickly and effectively to crises, while missionaries with many other groups have no such resources, said James Giles, the Colombia mission's disaster relief coordinator. For example, missionaries spent \$25,000 to help the Colombian Red Cross fill acute shortages in medicine, medical supplies, portable power generators, and powdered milk.

Disaster relief "opens doors that would never be opened in any other way," said Giles, who also is president of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Cali. To the injured and homeless and to Colombian government officials and relief workers, Baptist disaster response gives "death to what being a Baptist means," Giles said. It shows Baptists are "willing to respond to physical suffering as well as spiritual needs."

"There's absolutely no way we can call ourselves Christians and not respond," said Giles' wife, Mary Nell. "The Bible says Jesus went about doing good. 'Ours is the type of help that changes people,' she noted. 'That's why we're spending so much time and resources to help.'"

"You may not be able to go back and count numbers of conversions," said Don Pearson, an orthopedic surgeon from Orlando, Fla., who also worked at Ibague's state hospital, "but it's a long-term statement" of "love and concern . . . because of Christ."

Among the 85 Baptist churches in Colombia, a number collected food and clothing. The Colombian Baptist Convention donated about \$700 from its limited budget and a 20-member mission in the city of Tunj took \$150 out of its budget. Few individuals in the churches make as much as \$100 a month.

Art Toalston of the FMB, traveled to Colombia to make firsthand reports.

The Way loses tax exemption

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP) — The Internal Revenue Service has revoked The Way International's tax-exempt status as a religious organization, an action which leaders of The Way say infringes on their first amendment rights and freedoms.

The IRS charges that The Way was involved in the political campaigns of certain individuals between 1975 and 1978, and that The Way made loans to individuals and businesses in ways that do not conform to U.S. Tax Code. Way officials deny both charges, and claim that the IRS is attributing to The Way actions of individual members.

The IRS has recognized The Way as a church since 1955. "The Way easily meets the IRS' criteria for determining whether an organization is a church," said a Way spokesperson. "In effect they're saying 'If Way people get involved in political campaigns, The Way International is involved and is therefore not a church.' If they succeed in revoking our tax-exempt status on those grounds, who will be next? . . . We hope to establish a precedent that will discourage the IRS from attacking other groups on similar grounds."

The Way has petitioned the IRS for a new tax exemption, and is continuing to plan an appeal of the original revocation.



Historical issue available

The full-color cover of the *Baptist Record's* historical issue commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and the 100th anniversary

of the Convention Board is shown above. The historical issue is available for \$2 by writing the *Baptist Record*, Box 530, Jackson, Miss. 39205.

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Scrapbook

The Christ child's birthday

That night
in Bethlehem
a great star moved across
the sky — earth's quintessential hour
of joy.

Amazed
sheep herders heard
the angel's words," Fear not:
—behold, I bring — good tidings of
great joy."

They left
their flock to seek
the Child — found Him asleep
on fragrant hay in a small cave,
rejoiced.

Against
the bitter cold
sweet Mary's son was wrapped
in a wool blanket, white as milk,
silk soft.

Wise men
came from the east.
Each brought rare gifts, pure gold,
rich frankincense and myrrh for Christ,
the Lord.

Above
the angels sang,
praise God for His love-gift.
On Christmas night the Savior came,
our Lord.

Eunice D. Barnes
Pascagoula

Maturity

There'll bloom a time one Christmas Day
when you will know the lovely way
that God prepared to save his own
from dying in Earth's sin alone.

Your humble path will seem enough
as you search beyond the tinsel fluff
and accept the gift of God's own Son.
Space was conquered by that One.

—Violet Tackett, McComb

Christmas Day

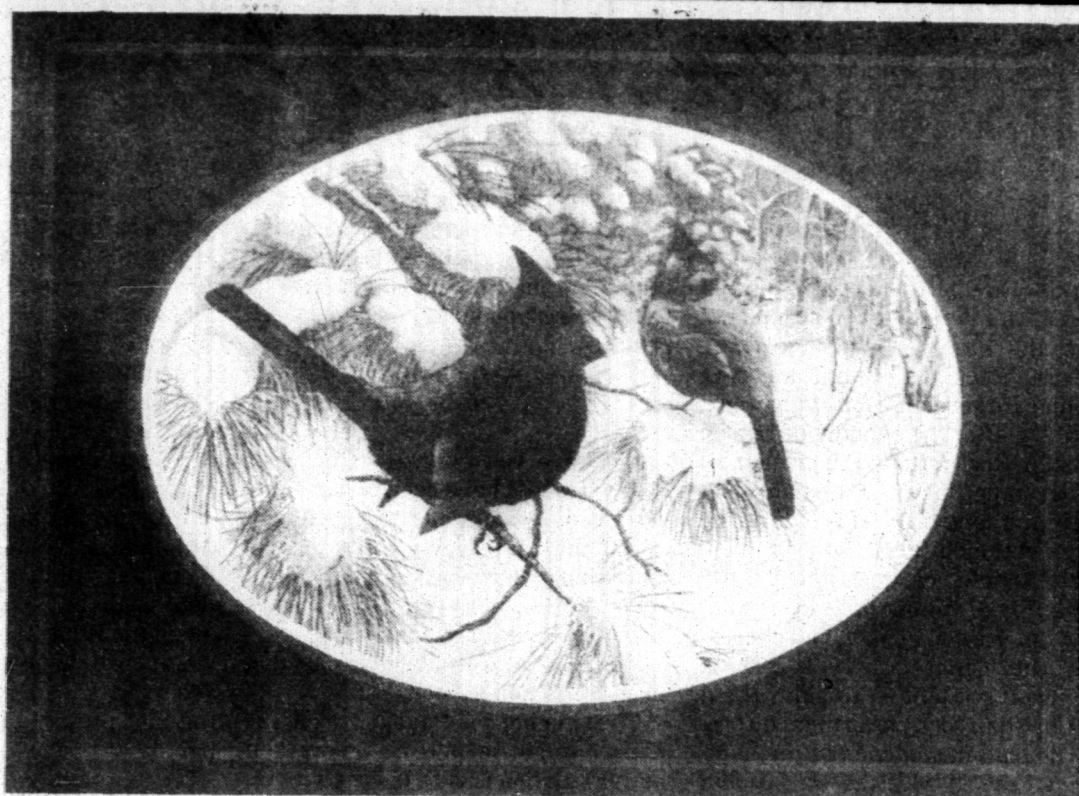
"My Father God, now is the time,
To visit children that are mine.
This Christmas Day I'll go to earth,
Though some won't recognize my worth.

And other's hearts will be as stone,
They all are lost, they're so alone.
But as a helpless baby fair,
True worshippers will find me there.

I'll take the gifts that we have planned,
Great peace and joy for every man,
Victory too, and saving grace,
Storehouse of riches for their place.

The angels sing and stars declare
To earth, on Christmas I'll be there;
To offer gifts to those, my own,
And bring them back with me, to home."

Mrs. D. F. Crowe
Greenville



As Christmastime draws near

Haven't you noticed that
As Christmastime draws near
It seems that just about everything
Turns into a beautiful bright red?

Red berries hanging on
The dogwood trees
The holly trees
The yaupon trees
The pyracanthas
Just to name a few.

And each tree becomes
A living Christmas tree
Decorated by God
in his favorite color.

There's the beautiful red
poinsettias
And wreaths on the doors
With red ribbon bows
And long streamers flowing.

The red Christmas cactus
In full bloom on Christmas Day
Forms a bright bouquet
For the coffee table.

And red candles glowing
On the mantel
And in the centerpiece
arrangement
On the dining table.

And bright red lights adorn
The big Christmas tree
And many of the packages
Are wrapped in red.

Most of our Christmas cards
Are designed in red
And some have their own
Red envelopes to match.

The elegant red dresses
Worn at Christmas parties
Add a festive touch
To the holiday season.

And don't forget
the bright red cardinals
Perched on the branches of
The crepe myrtle tree.

Could it be?
Could it just be . . .
That all the beautiful reds
At Christmastime
Point us to the blood of Jesus
That washes us as white as snow?

—Ruby Singley
Columbia

W. Lowrey Cooper, 81, dies in Waco

Mississippi native W. Lowrey Cooper, 81, died Dec. 8 in Waco, Tex. He was missionary to Argentina for 35 years, appointed in 1939, and retired 1974. He was president for 20 years of International Baptist Theological Seminary, Buenos Aires. He led the seminary from small national institution to being international co-educational seminary training Baptist workers for Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia and other countries. "His initiative and vision have been responsible for much of the progress the institution has made" wrote one missionary.

Cooper and his wife Kitty also worked with five churches in the Buenos Aires area, all of which he served as pastor. After Cooper resigned in 1966 from the seminary presidency which he felt he should turn over to a

younger man, the couple started a completely new ministry. They studied German during a furlough and went to the Northern Argentine province of Misiones which is home of many German speaking people. He was pastor of churches in Posadas and Obera.

Cooper worked five years past the normal missionary retirement age of 65, at the unanimous request of fellow missionaries. "To all the Argentine missionaries, Bill and Kitty Cooper have been mom and dad, a model to be emulated, the essence of constancy, stability, and faithfulness," said colleague James Teel, who now works in Canada.

Born in Itta Bena, Cooper lived there and in Grenada and Sumner while growing up. He is a graduate of Southern Seminary.

Cooper married the former Katherine Tomlinson of Ludlow in 1927. He did music and education work in several churches and was pastor of First Church, Moorhead and Southside Church, Montgomery Ala. The Foreign Mission Board appointed the Coopers missionaries in 1939, and they joined the seminary faculty in Buenos Aires the same year.

On retirement they moved to Waco where they joined Seventh and James Church. He is survived by his wife, five sisters, five children, 22 grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

Funeral services were scheduled for Dec. 10 at Seventh and James Church.

Man's ears are not made to shut, but his mouth is.

Literacy work reaches Hindus

BANGALORE, India — An effort to teach Indian Baptists to read and write has led six Hindus in the past four months to become Christians.

Southern Baptist missionaries began the effort this year to battle India's 50 percent illiteracy. Their program offers teacher training and materials that present the story of Jesus after only a few sessions.

Seventeen training centers were opened with Baptist pastors and church starters receiving teacher training. The first literacy study groups involved only Christians. But as Hindu friends and neighbors saw participants' rapid progress in writing their names and reading sentences, they began asking for help.

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Evangelism leaders blame decline on controversy

By Jim Newton

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP) — Expressing concern over statistics projecting a decline in baptisms for 1985, almost a dozen state Baptist evangelism directors blamed continuing controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention as one of the major reasons for the decline.

According to projections prepared by the research departments of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and the SBC Home Mission Board, SBC churches will baptize about 346,000 new converts during 1985.

The projections would make 1985 the third lowest year in baptisms in the last 35 years. The projections indicate a decline of 6.9 percent from 1984 levels.

When the statistical projections were announced during the national evangelism conference sponsored by the SBC Home Mission Board, the audience at the Holiday Inn groaned audibly.

Several evangelism leaders expressed dismay that the number of baptisms, considered by most as a key indicator of the denomination's efforts in evangelism, would decline during the year of prayer and preparation for a series of simultaneous revival meetings in the spring of 1986.

Bob Hamblin, evangelism vice-president for the Home Mission Board, said one of the major reasons for the decline is "we Southern Baptists have been saying to the nation we are more concerned about our little theological differences than we are about winning people to the Lord Jesus Christ."

Hamblin said he believes the continuing theological controversy in the SBC has had a direct effect on the number of baptisms last year and said the statistical projections were an indication of greater need for Southern Baptists to put top priority in 1986 on the "Good News America: God Loves You" simultaneous revivals.

He added that Baptists, however, shouldn't magnify the controversy and lament it as one of the reasons for the decline but instead should focus on the need for unity of purpose for the cause of evangelism.

Charles Harvey, state evangelism director in Louisiana where baptisms were down by more than a thousand from last year, said the controversy has put Southern Baptists in such an embarrassing position publicly that non-Christians are laughing at Baptists.

"They are saying we Baptists don't love each other and are fighting over things that don't matter, and they're using that as an excuse not to accept the Lord," he said in an interview.

Another evangelism leader from Louisiana, retired evangelism director Leonard Sanderson who was SBC national director of evangelism during the 1950s, said the controversy probably has had more effect on Baptists than on non-Christians, who don't really care about denominational squabbles.

"Instead of going out to witness to the lost, Baptists (especially the pastors) have been preoccupied with theological differences instead of putting their emphasis on winning people to Christ," Sanderson said.

Carlos McLeod, Texas Baptists' evangelism director, said he felt the major reason baptisms are down is because Baptists have not been putting their priorities on evangelism. McLeod said however, that the controversy has broken the hearts of many Baptists and made them realize they must quit fighting and put their major emphasis on winning people to Christ.

George Worrell, evangelism director in Missouri, said he was deeply distressed about a projected eight percent decline in baptisms in his state, and said one reason is because 115 of the key churches in Missouri did not schedule any revivals during 1985 because of schedule conflicts with other denominational programs. When that many key churches don't put major emphasis on evangelism, it affects the entire state, Worrell said.

Dan Agee, evangelism director for Virginia Baptists, discounted the effect of the SBC controversy on the number of baptisms, saying "the average Baptists doesn't really give a hoot about the controversy."

Agee said the decline is not because of methods or programs, because Baptists have developed the most effective methods and programs available. "I think the basic problem is that our pastors and people don't know how to build relationships in death, discover the needs of people in their community, and develop ministries to meet those needs," Agee said.

Sanderson agreed reasons for the decline in baptisms are far more complicated than putting all the blame on one factor. He said that through the years, baptisms have gone up and down with no real pattern or understandable reasons. "You just can't blame it on one thing," he said.

Guy Henderson, evangelism director for Mississippi Baptists, agreed, citing multiple factors for the decline. "It's difficult to generalize."

Henderson said one major factor is that most members of most churches are not really burdened about reaching unbelievers in their communities. "In too many cases," Henderson observed, "we're just baptizing our own children who are growing up in Baptist churches."

Clay Price, director of the Home Mission Board's program research department who presented statistical projections at the conference, pointed out the data tends to confirm Henderson's belief. Price said that since 1980, there has been a 10 percent decline in the number of youth, ages 10 to 18, nationally.

(Continued on page 9)

Three staffers named by Home Mission Board

ATLANTA (BP) — The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's executive committee elected three new staff members including a liaison staffer with Woman's Missionary Union, SBC, and voted to reduce the interest on HMB church loans.

Jimmye S. Winter, Baptist Women's consultant for Woman's Missionary Union, SBC, in Birmingham, Ala., was elected as WMU field worker for the Home Mission Board, succeeding Helen Fling of Birmingham, who has retired.

Winter has been on the staff of Woman's Missionary Union, SBC, since 1977 when she became GA/Mission Friends consultant.

Executive committee members also elected Ray Dalton, a mission

pastor in Chicago, as associate director of the program research department, and named Joan O. Redford of Atlanta as administrative assistant to the president.

Dalton, a native of Oak Ridge, Tenn., has been pastor/minister of Near North Church in Chicago since 1979.

Redford, currently executive secretary to the vice-president, missions, for the Home Mission Board, will succeed Leonoar Adams who is retiring as administrative assistant to the president after 40 years with the board.

She is married to David Redford, son of the late Courts Redford, executive secretary of the Home Mission Board for 1954-64.

In other major action, the executive committee reduced the interest rate charged on HMB church loans from 13.75 percent to 13.0 percent, in keeping with previous board action which would charge the same rate of interest on church loans that the board pays for borrowed funds.

Board members also approved appropriations totaling \$200,000 for the purchase of property in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, for the relocation of the Hispanic Baptist Seminary in Puerto Rico. The seminary has outgrown its current facilities at the Baptist Building in San Juan and is moving to a larger suburban location.

The executive committee appointed a national consultant to work with Continuing Witness Training and a national missionary to lead a national training effort for church and associational missions development programs.

Ronald G. Barker, associate pastor and minister of education for Prairie Creek Baptist Church, Plano, Texas, was appointed a new national consultant in evangelism for Continuing Witness Training.

John Budlong, pastor of Mullins Station Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., was named a national missionary to promote church and associational missions development.

In other personnel matters, the executive committee appointed eight new missionaries, five missionary associates, four church planter apprentices, and approved 10 persons to receive church pastoral aid, eight to receive field pastoral assistance, and approved seven as mission pastors and four as mission pastor interns.

Notice to church treasurers

The 1985 books of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board will close with the mail received in our office December 31, 1985. Any gifts to be counted for 1985 must be mailed in order to reach us by that time.

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DISNEY WORLD, EPCOT, January 27-31. \$250 per person double occupancy including lodging, tickets, breakfast. Shows, Tours, Box 2554, Laurel, MS 39442 (601) 729-2202; 1-800-826-6849.

What do you say about Planned Growth in Giving?



The whole thing just excites me because the aim is to lead our people, who are not giving as they should, to give because of the blessing that comes to the individual from being a cheerful, spiritual giver. Then it is the overflow that reaches out to bless and do far more in the whole world.

Winfred Moore

Winfred Moore, pastor
First Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas

Christmas Eve (1999)

(Continued from page 2)

young men in the Arctic shared a common experience, a vision of peace and hope drawing on the simple old story of the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. And simple and old it might be; but it was also a living, imperishable story, and that it was intended to be, always and in the future, in the 21st century and in centuries to follow.

And as long as there will be the Northern Lights, there will be that story of the Prince of Peace.

John Martens lives in Ontario, Canada.

\$50,000 in hunger funds sent to Missouri farmers

ATLANTA (BP) — The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board has sent \$50,000 of its hunger funds to the Missouri Baptist Convention for distribution to Missouri Baptist farm families.

Home Mission Board President William G. Tanner said the funds were given in response to a request from John Dowdy, state missions director in Missouri.

"Not only are farm families losing their homes and their way of making a living, but also some do not have enough income to put food on their tables," said Tanner. "We want to reach out in the spirit of the one whose birth we are celebrating. We only wish it could be more."

This is the first request to the Home Mission Board for hunger funds of this size, said Paul Adkins, associate director of missions ministries. Adkins coordinates distribution of hunger funds for the board. He noted that the farmer's plight "is no longer just a concern for a few people. It is a crisis for all Americans. We're delighted we can help with even this drop in the bucket," he said.

With 79,369 acres of farm land, Missouri is the hardest hit state, by acreage, according to an article in WORD AND WAY, the Baptist paper for Missouri, Colorado, Kansas, Georgia, and Mississippi follow in farm acreage.

Missouri Baptists have 1,500 rural and village churches, an estimated 400 of these are in the depressed Cornbelt region of northern Missouri. Because many of the church congregations are small, they lack resources to minister to the material needs of the church members.

"Recent events such as the mass

Baptism decline blamed . .

(Continued from page 8)

"Since about 40 to 45 percent of the persons baptized by Southern Baptist churches are in that age category, the decline in youth population could account for the decrease in baptisms," said Price.

Price said the decline seemed to be across the board in a majority of states. Out of 24 state conventions providing data on baptisms to the board, 12 reported decreases and 11 reported increases, Price explained.

Price said the 1985 projected number of baptisms, a decrease of 6.9 percent compared to the 1984 baptisms, would make 1985 the third lowest year of baptisms in the SBC in the last 35 years. Since 1950, baptisms were below 345,000 only in 1977 and 1978, Price said. During that 35 year period, the number of baptisms increased 18 years and decreased 17 years, Price added. The peak year was in 1972 when SBC churches baptized 445,725 converts.

Jim Newton writes for the Home Mission Board.

murder-suicide of four people in rural Iowa are indicative of the anger, frustration, and depression that has settled on the Cornbelt," explained Gary Farley, associate director of rural-urban missions at the Home Mission Board.

"I am hopeful this gift (\$50,000) will be perceived as a glimmer of hope, an act of Christian love and brotherhood," he added. "I know that at the Home Mission Board — and across our land — they are being remembered daily in prayer."

Home Mission Board hunger funds are received from churches and individuals concerned for homeless and hungry Americans. None of the

money comes from the Cooperative Program or Annie Armstrong Easter Offerings.

All hunger funds are used to purchase food.

In response to the nation-wide farm crisis, Don Evans, rural-urban missions associate at the Missouri Baptist Convention, produced a video-tape on the farm crisis, "Come Before Winter." The program has been aired on 12 television stations in Missouri.

Requests for the hunger funds from Missouri Baptist farmers will be channeled from pastors through their associational directors of missions, to the missions department of the Missouri Baptist Convention.

Letters to the Editor

(Continued from page 6)

In November 1949 my grandfather had the opportunity to begin teaching in the Delta Center of the Mississippi Baptist Seminary in Indianola. This work proved very challenging and rewarding to my grandfather, who drove the 16 miles to Indianola four afternoons each week to teach. In 1951 the West Delta Center of the seminary was opened in Greenville, and Granddad was asked to teach there.

My grandfather continued to teach there in the years that followed and was asked to serve as dean as well. He taught Bible classes and sermon construction as well as basic courses in English and even Biblical Archaeology. He considered this teaching and his close association with his students to be the most rewarding work of his years in the ministry.

My grandmother wrote friends, "The school closed in April. He enjoys teaching so much — the men think he is a great teacher. The day after school closed I drove with him nearly 50 miles to attend the annual association of Negro churches. One of his pupils was the moderator and another preached the memorial sermon. He (the preacher) 'carried us to glory.' Notes from letters my grandfather wrote: May 23, 1954 — "Last Thursday was graduation day for our entire Seminary with the exercises taking place in Jackson. I had 10 to receive awards of various kinds." And on April 1, 1957 — "I have agreed to preach for Dr. Henry Harrison Humes, Negro convention president. (He has been cool toward our Seminary.)" March 5, 1958 "School continues. Sunday morning I had a great time preaching for one of my students, an old man. (Granddad was 78!) The most encouraging feature of his work is a young people's choir of 'about 25 who really can sing . . .'"

And so his years of active service in the Lord's work ended on a joyful note.

Suzanne Boone
Mississippi Baptist Seminary
Board of Trustees

Preschool literature

The purpose of this letter is to bring attention to the usefulness of the

preschool literature published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. The consistent application of these guidelines can result in meaningful and rewarding experiences for the child and the teacher as well as the parent.

From personal experience, these Bible-based principles guide teachers to a better understanding of preschoolers; it gives them insight into family relationships and how to help parents "train up a child in the way he should go." The use of this material gives a child an understanding of Bible truths and lays the foundation for a child to accept Christ.

Much of the information in the Guide A, B, and C quarterly magazines can be used or adapted for each church's use. The magazines for the children and parents, "Living" for 2's and 3's, "Growing" for 4's and 5's, as well as "Living with Preschoolers" offer a wealth of information for parents as well as teachers. Available at the Baptist Book Store are the books for teachers and parents, "Understanding Preschoolers," and "How to Guide Preschoolers."

We owe it to our children to prepare and plan for them; and once teachers and directors are aware of the responsibility we have in teaching preschoolers and the wonderful assistance we have available, we will become more concerned and more involved in guiding their spiritual and mental and physical growth.

Name withheld
by request

A wise man pasted this in his hat to serve as a reminder: "Any man can spoil himself for himself. He can allow himself to grow so sensitive that he lives in constant pain. He can nurse his grudges until they are an intolerable burden. He can think himself insulted until he is apt to be. He can believe the world's against him until it is. He can imagine troubles until they are real. He can insult his friends until they are no longer friends. He can think himself so important that no one else enjoys his friendship. He can become so wrapped up in himself that he becomes very small."

Christmas City may draw million

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (EP) — On Thanksgiving day the switch was pulled to turn on more than a million and a quarter lights, officially opening Christmas City at PTL's Heritage USA. Billed as "America's best attended holiday attraction," Christmas City is expected to draw over one million visitors before it closes Jan. 31.

"Thanksgiving night we will begin celebrating 'The Birthday Party' for two exciting months," proclaimed Jim Bakker, host of the PTL television show. "Christmas City is going to be even more magnificent this year as we observe Jesus Christ's birthday at Heritage USA."

The city includes specially decorated theme areas: Welcome Way, Candy Cane Lane, Angel Boulevard, A Country Christmas, Grand Tree Boulevard, and Christmas Island. Displays at Christmas Island include, "Mrs. Claus' Christmas Kitchen, The Penguin's Igloo, An Eskimo Family, Beavers' Dam, Santa's Deer, and Children's Christmas Morning."

Other events include the presentation of "The Birthday Party," the dramatic Christmas musical "Love Came Down," "The Living Nativity," "The Singing Christmas Tree," "Sing America Sing," and concerts with Doug Oldham, Andrae Crouch, and Randy Stonehill.

Volunteers changing missions, says Parks

RICHMOND, Va. — A new kind of missions is taking place because Southern Baptists in the pew are beginning to assume responsibility for home and foreign missions, says Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks.

"If that continues to happen it will not only change what's happening on the mission fields, it will radically change what's happening in our churches," Parks told about 70 Southern Baptists who gathered in Richmond, Va., Nov. 20-23 to look at Southern Baptist lay volunteer involvement overseas.

The Foreign Mission Board brought together key volunteers and denominational leaders with an interest in the program to help evaluate their working relationships and talk about ways Southern Baptists can use volunteers overseas more effectively, said Ed Bullock, associate director of the board's volunteer enlistment department.

The fast growth in the program, the rapid influx of hunger and relief funds and the increased number of Baptists going from traditional "mission fields" to do missions in other coun-

tries are some of the most significant happenings in missions in the last five years, Parks told the group.

Owen Cooper, Yazoo City, Miss., industrialist and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, issued a call for "activating the pew into meaningful involvement in the things that Christ put upon our shoulders to do."

Instead of classifying Christians as ordained and unordained or professionals and volunteers, he suggested that there are only two kinds of Christians, those who are involved in Christian ministry and those who are "AWOL" (Absent Without Leave).

If Christians followed Jesus' example of servanthood, it would place an awesome responsibility on the unordained, said Cooper. "We are all ministers, all of us, and we have a tremendous responsibility." Christians may have different functions, but all have the same responsibility, he said, citing Jesus' commission to his followers to be his witnesses in all the earth. "He (Jesus) didn't put a geographical limitation on my responsibility."

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Just for the Record



Greenfield Church, Greenville, RAs won first place honors in the flag contest held Sept. 27 and 28 at the Washington County Association mission camp field day. Pictured, front row, (left to right), are Andy Parrish, Jeff Eaton, Daniel Woblington, Joey Woblington, Philip Laney, Chris Kimes, Joey Coker, Chris Barrett, and Will Parrish. (Not pictured) Jimmy Parrish, Chris Livingston, and Joey Helms. Back row, J. H. Kerr, Washington County RA director, James Parrish, Jim Dozier, Curtis Kimes, RA leaders, Greenfield Church, and Mrs. Paula Parrish, (not pictured). The flag has a rainbow, a cross, emblem of the state of Mississippi, flags, and the theme, "HELP OTHERS IN JESUS NAME."

At **Mountain Creek Church, Florence**, on Dec. 22, the cantata choir will be performing at 10:30 a.m., "O Come Let Us Adore Him." At 7 p.m., the children will present a program. Eddie Pilgrim is pastor. Eddie Dear is music director.

First Church, Taylorsville, will present a Living Nativity Scene on Dec. 21, 22, and 23 beginning at 7 p.m. each evening.

The scene will have 11 characters in costume in a tableau format depicting the birth, worship, and praise of the Christ child. There will be live animals included in the scene. Background music will be produced by the combined choirs of the music ministry.

Celebration of Christmas music will be presented by the sanctuary choir, Harrisville Church, Harrisville, entitled "Come To The Manger," Dec. 22, 7 p.m. It is a kind of Carols by Candlelight feeling with a southern gospel flavor under the direction of music minister, Sammy J. McDonald.



Stanley and Glenna Stamps were recently guest speakers at the RA and GA missions camp, sponsored by Washington County Association. The RAs camped out with 79 RAs, 24 dads and leaders, and four pastors attending. Over 100 GAs and leaders attended the missions camp where they cooked foods native to Honduras. Pictured, left to right, are Roy Raddin, associational director; Mrs. Donna Germany, associational GA leader, Glenna Stamps, Stanley Stamps, and James H. Kerr, associational RA director.



First Church, Collinsville, Lauderdale Association, recently held ground breaking ceremonies for a new educational building, which will house a pre-school department, library and adult classrooms. Pictured are David L. Sellers, pastor; Mrs. Lela Mae Merritt and Mrs. Eleze Walker, charter members; T. S. Pigford, building committee chairman, and Billy Allen, chairman of deacons.



W. B. Abel was honored on his 90th birthday, Nov. 3, 1985, with a reception at Union Ridge Church, Winston Association. Approximately 300 friends and relatives attended. Many were from churches where he was previously pastor.

Abel was born in Grenada County, on Nov. 3, 1895. He was licensed to the ministry on May 5, 1916. On Oct. 14, 1926, Abel was married to Carrie Marshall Spencer. They have one daughter, Peggy Abel Hills.

During his 69 years in the ministry, Abel has led, in whole or in part, in the erection of five church buildings. He has preached an estimated 270 revivals, ten in his own churches. He was pastor of five churches, First, Plaquemine; La., Rolling Fork Church, Rolling Fork; Collins, Collins; Poplar Springs Drive, Meridian; and Noxapater, Noxapater. During that time he was also pastor of four churches in the afternoons, Straight Bayou, Rolling Fork; Leaf River, Collins; Causeyville, Meridian; and Mount Horeb, Meridian.

Since retirement, W. B. Abel has been interim pastor of three churches, Beacon Street Church, Philadelphia, Macedonia Church, Louisville, and Union Ridge Church, Noxapater, where he is beginning his 16th year.

The Gospel Glory Choir, senior adult ministry, Harrisville Church, Harrisville, presented a program called "Carol of Christmas," Dec. 15. This choir has sung at the state capitol and the Simpson Convention. Minister of music is Sammy J. McDonald.

Linwood Church (Neshoba) choir will present a musical drama, "Bethlehem, Our Home Town," Dec. 22, at 7 p.m. The choir is under the direction of Jamie Meadows. Johnny Collins is pastor.



GAs and Acteens, Calvary Church, Cleveland, were recently honored for their achievements in Mission Adventures and Studiac. GAs receiving badges for completed Mission Adventures were Kim Dean, Kim Prescott, Jennifer Noblin, Jennifer Barefoot, Renee Latham, Kristi McLelland, Deanna Boren, Angela Williams, Lori Prescott and Michelle Hewitt. Acteens achieving the level of Queen in Studiac were Shandra Hurst, Tanya Turner, Stephanie Hunt, Allison Tindle, Glenda Tindle and Kristin Bost.

Michelle Hewitt and Lori Prescott were given special recognition recently for successfully completing all levels of Girls in Action Mission Adventures.

An exercise instructor workshop for churches will be hosted Jan. 10 & 11 by First Church, Jackson. Those interested in attending should contact Jim Baker, P. O. Box 1158, Jackson, MS 39205 or phone (601-355-2911).

Lisa Baker, certified fitness specialist and choreographer for "Aerobirhythms," will be leading the workshop, which begins Friday afternoon and concludes Saturday afternoon.

The choir of **Cedar Grove Church, Columbia**, presented the cantata, "Noel, Christ is Born," at Faith Church, Silver Creek, Dec. 18.

Staff Changes

William R. Patten, has recently been called to Highland, Vicksburg as pastor. He goes from First Church, Greenwood.



Patten

His home is in Evergreen, Ala. He received degrees from Clarke College and Southwest Baptist University. In 1972, he received the Th.M. from New Orleans Seminary.

Joe Ford goes to North Phoenix

PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP) — Joe L. Ford, associate vice-president for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's evangelism section, has been named pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church.

Richard Jackson, pastor of the Phoenix church for the past 18 years, said he and Ford will share pastoral responsibilities of the 16,000-member church.

Jackson will be senior pastor and Ford will be pastor, moving to Phoenix Jan. 12.

Ford is a graduate of East Texas Baptist College, Marshall, Texas, and Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth, where he earned the doctor of ministry degree.

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HIDE or SEEK?
COMING SOON
TO A CHURCH NEAR YOU

A new covenant

By David W. Spencer

Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:37-40

What is the most appealing thing about Christianity to you? For many people, it is the opportunity of making a fresh start in life. What would you give to have the mistakes of the past wiped out? What would you give for a new lease on life if you were a prisoner? What would you give for healing if you were terminally ill? There's good news in this lesson from Jeremiah: by God's help you can start life all over again no matter what a mess you've made of it in the past. What a message that is to be shared with a lost world!

Surrounded by her enemies, facing national destruction, and ready to throw in the towel, God gave Jeremiah a message of hope and good news for his people: God has initiated a new covenant! It's not too late to begin again. The future is bright for those who live in covenant with God.

I. The nature of the new covenant (31:31-34)

Our focal passage begins with the word "Behold." Jeremiah is saying, "Take notice! God is doing something new and wonderful. Take a look at it." That's a good description of what we try to do in witnessing to lost people, isn't it? Just get them to look at the difference God can make.

Jeremiah's listeners might have said, "What new covenant? We've long known about covenants and we've always failed to keep covenant with God. Why should we get excited about another covenant?" The newness of the covenant was first-of-all seen in the fact that it was no longer external but that the law of God would be internalized.

No longer would the basis of covenant be laws written on stone but laws written upon the hearts of people. This probably refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. God will make his will, his ways, and his laws known to us through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. A believer who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit has the advantage of being led by the Spirit to keep covenant with God.

A second way this covenant is new can be seen in the personal relationship each member of the covenant

community can have with God. As seen in verse 34, previously God was known corporately through the testimonies and teachings of leaders. These leaders mediated something of the knowledge of God to the larger group. The beauty of the new covenant is that with the Spirit indwelling each believer, all can personally experience the presence of God! You don't have to know God by reputation, by books, by traditions, or anything else. Each person who participates in the new covenant can be on personal terms with God!

How is this possible? Verse 34 gives the answer: God will forgive iniquity and remember sin no more. What an awesome promise! In the words of a TV commercial, "How do you spell relief?" This great promise is relief to anyone who knows he has sinned and who wants something done about it.

II. The hope of the new covenant (32:37-40)

The fact of the new covenant gave hope to Jeremiah and he tried to communicate that hope to his people. Armed with the new covenant and its possibilities, Jeremiah pictured God's taking the initiative in seeking his scattered people who had been lost to sin. Verse 37 reminds us of Jesus' whole ministry and also of his parable of the lost sheep.

Verse 38 pictures a perfect relationship between God and the people of the new covenant. In verse 39, Jeremiah pictured a new people whose heart's desire was to love and serve God. How can we be sure that the new covenant won't fail to hold us once we've committed ourselves to a covenant relationship with God? This was the ultimate weakness of the old covenant: the people had to hold on to God. In the new covenant, however, God will do the holding on! Salvation in the new covenant begins with God's initiative and continues eternally by God's power. It will not fail!

With all this evidence of the nature and hope of the new covenant before us, who wouldn't want to trust Jesus Christ, start life over, and live in covenant with God?

Spencer is pastor, First, Long Beach.

For
Dec. 29

- Life and Work: *A new covenant*
- Uniform: *Doing God's will*
- Bible Book: *Visions of suffering and victory*

Visions of the suffering and victory of God's people

By J. Gerald Harris

Daniel 9:24-27; 12:1-4

Daniel was a man of prayer. His prayer in chapter 9 is the culmination of an entire life of prayer. Daniel on his knees had a greater influence than Darius on his throne. Daniel knew the secret to answered prayer. He saturated himself with the Word of God (v. 2); he set his face "to seek by prayer and supplication" the wisdom of God (v. 3); and consequently came to know the will of God. In fact, in v. 21 we have the record of God's instantaneous response by angelic envoy to Daniel's prayer.

I. The vision apprehended (9:24-27)

— God's answer to Daniel's prayer was given in a vision announced by the angel Gabriel. This vision is believed by many to convey the most significant prophetic information in the Old Testament.

The 70 weeks in v. 24 refer to weeks of years, thus 70 periods of seven years or 490 years. These 490 years are "determined upon the people," signifying Israel. Notice in v. 24 what is going to happen at the end of those 490 years. The six things mentioned in this verse point to the great return of Jesus Christ and the coming Kingdom.

If we could determine when that 490-year period started we could, by simple addition, determine when it ended. The starting point can be discovered by reading v. 25. Obviously, the 490 years began at the command to rebuild Jerusalem. Historians tell us that occurred on March 14, 445 B.C. when Artaxerxes issued his decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. From that decree of Artaxerxes until the Messiah, the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks . . . (v. 25).

Now, we have a week pulled out leaving only 69 weeks.

Consequently, from the decree of Artaxerxes to the coming of Messiah will be 69 times seven years or 483 years. Now these are years with 360 days in each year, because that is the length of the Jewish year. A. C. Gaebelien, in his commentary on Daniel, concludes that the day when Jesus rode into the city of Jerusalem, Palm Sunday, was exactly 173,880 days from the decree of Artaxerxes which equals 483 years of 360 days each.

The extra week, the seventieth week, is yet to come. There is a time gap, a parenthesis, between the 69th and 70th week. The church age, the age of grace in which we live, comprises the parenthesis. The final week of years represents the tribulation, the seven years following the rapture of the church.

The prince in v. 26 is a reference to a different person than the prince mentioned in v. 25. In fact, the prince in v. 26 is a reference to the destroyer, the antichrist; and in v. 27 we have a reference to the abomination of desolation. The abomination of desolation pertains to the desecration of the temple orchestrated by the antichrist during the great tribulation.

II. The victory anticipated (12:1-4)

— The phrase "at that time" refers to the last half of the 70th week, the last 3½ years of the tribulation. It is described as "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" (also note Matt. 24:21). Michael, the archangel of God, will stand up and take a vital part in the deliverance of the Jewish people. The believing Jews, those "found written in the book" will be delivered.

At the end of the tribulation, when Christ returns to the earth, the Old Testament saints and the tribulation saints will be raised up to everlasting life. The Old Testament saints will not be resurrected at the rapture of the church, because the Bible teaches that only "the dead in Christ shall rise" at the rapture (1 Thess. 4:16). The tribulation saints will be composed of people like Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah who, rather than bow down to the image set up by the antichrist, will suffer themselves to be slaughtered. These saints will sleep in the dust of the earth and shall be raised up at the end of the tribulation to inherit everlasting life.

Those who awake "to shame and everlasting contempt" refers to those Jews from all generations who shall be raised up with all unbelievers at the end of the millenium to stand before the great white throne judgment.

The servants of God who are true to Him will shine brilliantly during those dark days of trouble. Those who are truly wise will choose God over life itself.

As v. 4 indicates, the prophecies of Daniel were to be sealed until "the time of the end." Indeed, to the Jews the book of Daniel is a sealed book. However, when the time of the end comes Daniel will become an open book; and "many shall run to and fro" through the pages of this prophecy to understand its truths.

Harris is pastor, Colonial Heights, Jackson.

Applegate, 66, dies in Starkville

D. C. Applegate, 66, former pastor of First Church, Starkville from 1954 to 1971, died in Starkville, Dec. 13.

He had served as pastor at churches in Paragould, Ark.; Memphis; Markley, Tex.; and Seminole, Okla. He was a graduate of Arkansas State College and Southwestern Seminary.

Applegate served on numerous Mississippi Baptist committees including being vice chairman of the MBC Executive Committee. He was chairman of the trustees of Mississippi Baptist Seminary, a member of the SBC Committee on the Study of Education, and served on the Annuity Board.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Catherine Rogers Applegate; daughter, Mrs. Sharon Applegate Nobles of Starkville; two brothers, and two grandchildren. Burial was to be in Linwood Cemetery in Paragould.

Doing God's Will

By Anthony S. Kay

Matthew 13; Mark 12:28-34

Often it is not what we know but what we do that is so important. Knowing and doing God's will are of vital importance. Let's observe three key words that help us understand this lesson.

I. Parables — In Matthew 13, Jesus introduces the use of parables. The Greek word *parabollos* means technically "to cast or throw to the side of." Jesus used this method to help the disciples understand his teachings. Someone has suggested several reasons why Jesus used parables: (1) as judgments; (2) to provoke questions and create interest; (3) to make truth portable (carry it with you); (4) as an effective method of teaching.

II. Kingdom — The use of the term kingdom of God is significant. Jesus used several parables to define what was meant by the Kingdom. It was a hidden treasure, a pearl of great price, a grain of mustard seed and leaven, among other things. In these parables, Jesus indicates that the Kingdom of God involves joy that overwhelms, greatness that comes through quiet dignity, and faith that gives its best.

The kingdom of God and all that it imparts is not cheap. Too often Christians can be viewed in the same manner as the street children of a Mexican city. They would go up and down the streets hawking their wares. They cried out as they solicited prospective customers, "Cheap crosses for sale,

cheap crosses for sale." Jesus reminds us that the kingdom of God is priceless and that effective, constant, costly service results in joy.

You may be asking, "What does this have to do with God's will?" Indeed, what does it have to say?

III. Love — This word says that we are to be obedient to God. To become a part of the kingdom of God, we must surrender all that we are to God. The treasure of righteousness cannot be obtained apart from our total commitment. Doing God's will is completely related to knowing God's will and ultimately God's will is defined for us in the scripture. God's will is for us to become a part of the Kingdom, to live as Christ and to participate in his joy. When we love God first and foremost

and our fellowmen (even unlovely, mean and cantankerous fellowmen) we are doing God's will.

My problem has usually been that I know more than I do. God wants us to know his will, but most of all to do it. The world is waiting for Christians to show God's will through knowledge and action. With Jesus, we too must say "Thy will be done." This means I will do it.

Kay is pastor, First, Calhoun City.

Mississippi Baptist activities

Dec. 30-31 Youth Evangelism Conference; Mississippi College, Clinton; 1 p.m., 30th-5 p.m., 31st (EVAN)

Baptist Record

- Life and Work: Solving the sin problem
- Uniform: Responding to good news
- Bible Book: The birth of the Savior

Solving the sin problem

By David W. Spencer

Isaiah 11:1-4; Matthew 1:20-25

Why have Christmas and Easter continued to be our most celebrated and meaningful holidays? When you think about how long these events have been celebrated, you may wonder why our world has never grown tired of them. The reason these holidays remain important to us and continue to be celebrated around the world is because Christmas and Easter are God's answers to the deepest needs of our hearts. Christmas speaks to the need of hope, new beginnings, new life, and the forgiveness of sins. Easter speaks to the issues of death and eternal life.

During Isaiah's ministry his people needed a reason "to keep on keeping on." They needed hope for the nation and for the individual. Faced with these needs God gave to Isaiah

perhaps the most complete picture of the Messiah's personal characteristics to be found in the Old Testament.

I. The promise of the Messiah (Isaiah 11:1-4)

To get the full impact of verse 1 you have to go back and read chapter 10. As that chapter closed, Isaiah prophesied that the powerful Assyrian nation would fall one day. God himself would take care of Assyria, like a lumberjack lops off the branches of a tree and brings that towering tree crashing down. Everything that Assyria stood for was doomed. On the other hand, chapter 11 opens with the picture of a new branch growing up from the stump of Jesse (or the royal line of David). God's enemies have no future. God's people do have a future. Compare the crashing of Assyria to the floor of the forest to the quiet

growth of a new shoot from an old stump.

This new branch was the long-awaited Messiah. In verse 2 Isaiah began to describe the Messiah. He was characterized foremost by the presence of the Spirit of the Lord. In the Old Testament the Spirit of the Lord always came upon people to equip them for some great task. In this passage the Spirit equips him to rule over God's people.

Three pairs of virtues would be given to the Messiah to help him in this task: intellectual abilities, practical abilities to get things done, and religious abilities. The final pair — knowledge of the Lord and fear of the Lord — mean that he knows God from personal experiences and he reverences the majesty and holiness of God. This may be the heart of Old

Testament faith.

Some examples of the Messiah's style as a ruler are listed in verses 3ff. He sees beneath the surface, he gets the whole story, he defends the poor, he judges righteously, and he has the power to destroy evil.

Living in a free land today, it may be hard for some of us to appreciate this picture of the Messiah, but to Israel it was a blessed picture of hope for the future; all was not lost, and God was still in charge.

II. The appearance of the Messiah (Matthew 1:20-25)

The stump of Jesse seemed so dead on that first Christmas long ago. Where was this Messiah who would make all things right again? Then in Bethlehem "a tender shoot" appeared. The Messiah came as an innocent Child born to a peasant family. The family had difficulties with the unique manner of the Child's conception. Joseph was told that this was the work of the Holy Spirit. He was also told that the child was to be named

Jesus, for he would save his people from their sins. That explanation was an interpretation of the name Jesus which literally means "Jehovah saves."

The angel who explained these matters to Joseph told him that the birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies such as those of Isaiah. So the Messiah was here at last! The fulfillment of the Jewish hopes and indeed of many other cultures had come to pass at last.

The "tender shoot" of Isaiah became known as Jesus and soon Jesus set out to fulfill the meaning of his name. He made it possible for sin to be forgiven, for life to begin anew, and for the Kingdom of God to grow in the hearts and lives of people everywhere. In Jesus, all our hopes for salvation and meaning find their fulfillment. At last there was an answer to the sin problem!

Spencer is pastor, First, Long Beach.

The birth of the Savior

By J. Gerald Harris

Matthew 1:22-23; 2:1-12

The birth of Jesus is the most significant event in all of history. The incarnation is the point where the stream of history divides. The birth of Christ has split history in two. Our gospel did not begin with a word, but with the Word made flesh.

I. The prophecy (1:22-23) — Matthew reminds us of the prophecy of the virgin birth of our Savior recorded in Isa. 7:14. This miraculous birth was predicted 750 years before it ever occurred. Scriptural validity is given by Matthew who reports the angel saying to Joseph, "... fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (1:20).

Further corroboration is given by Luke who records Mary's response to the angel's announcement (see Luke 1:34). John's gospel adds authenticity to the virgin birth by referring to

Jesus as "the only begotten Son" of God. The phrase "only begotten" means the only begotten directly and literally by God without a human father.

So the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the virgin birth came to pass even as he declared it. Thus when the eternal Christ was born he "took upon him (self) the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7). He is the only man who ever lived who at birth was as old as his father and older than his mother — the eternal, incarnate Son of God.

II. The probing (2:1-2) — "Wise men from the east" came to Jerusalem probing, inquiring, searching in hopes of finding the one "born King of the Jews." We have no accurate information concerning the wise men apart from Matthew. We may conclude that they were part of an oriental priestly system who were

familiar with astronomy and had been taught by some scattered Jews to expect the coming of a Messiah, a universal Savior.

Their probing, searching spirit must be admired. Such honest inquiry is honored by God. Jeremiah declared, "Ye shall seek me and find me when ye search for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

III. The plot (2:3-8) — When Herod, the king over the province of Judea, heard that the wise men had come to Jerusalem in search of a newborn king he began to have anxiety attacks. He felt threatened and feared that he might lose his throne. Not only was Herod troubled, the entire city of Jerusalem shared in his anxiety. That which was a time of triumph was regarded as a time of trouble. They were doubting when they should have been shouting.

Herod called for "the chief priests

and scribes of the people." From these numbers of the Sanhedrin he sought information and counsel. They informed him that Micah the prophet had declared the birth of the Messiah would occur in Bethlehem (see Micah 5:2).

Herod then arranged to meet with the wise men in a private session. Under the pretense of sincere interest he inquired as to the time the star first appeared. That, apparently, was an effort to determine the exact date of the birth of Jesus. He was gathering information that would help him know how to best locate and terminate this child, Jesus. Thus we see Herod's plot.

IV. The praise (2:9-12) — Most Christmas pageants portray the wise men finding the Christ child in a manger. The shepherds visited Bethlehem "and found Mary, and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger" (Luke 2:16). The wise men found Christ "when they were come into the house" (Matt. 2:11). Having found the Christ child, the wise men worshiped him.

Any religious teaching is false and unscriptural which gives Mary or anyone or anything preeminence or precedence over Christ. Peter learned this on the Mount of Transfiguration when he made the mistake of placing Moses and Elijah on the same level with Jesus. Peter had said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Matt. 17:4). To that suggestion God thundered from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5). In essence God said, "Peter, listen to my words. No one is comparable to my Son! Hear him, Peter!" The Scripture then reads, "And when they had lifted up their eyes they saw no man save Jesus only" (Matt. 17:5).

Notice in v. 11 the praise of the wise men: "(they) fell down and worshiped him, and ... they presented unto Him gifts ..." He alone is worthy of worship and praise!

Harris is pastor of Colonial Heights, Jackson.

Responding to good news

By Anthony S. Kay

Matthew 2

Have you ever heard anyone say, "After that, what do you do for an encore?" The natural expression to good news should be joyful participation. Let us observe the manner in which the wise received and responded to the good news in contrast to that of Herod and the religious leaders, and what our response should be today.

The response of the wise men. Significantly, the wise men observed a star and began a quest of destiny. As men who studied the stars, they knew the recorded history such as it was. They wanted to discover the meaning of this heavenly light. Thus, they made every effort to locate the product of this star and gloriously, they discovered the source of all light.

They found God's gift of love — the light for all men.

These men were so moved at the discovery of Christ that they gave him gifts. These gifts were gold (royalty), frankincense (divinity), and myrrh (humanity). It is evident that they were responding to Christ in a way befitting a king. When they found the source of light, they gloriously and lovingly gave their gifts.

The response of Herod. Note the stark contrast of Herod's hate to the wise men's love. In Herod, there was evidenced fear of losing, greed of possessing, and anger of protecting his position. How foolish it was for Herod to miss the thrill of gaining a kingdom of righteousness, of obtain-

ing the riches of God's bounty and of establishing a rule under divine leadership. He wanted to know where the Christ was, not to worship him, but to destroy the threat to his personal world. John says, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11).

What does this Christmas story say to you and me? It suggests that the response that should be made after finding the source of light and life is to give graciously of ourselves. We may not have great wealth, but we have something of value to God that we can give. Even a widow's mite doesn't go unnoticed. Tragically, many of us will be caught up in the commercialization of Christmas and

will allow the very name of Christ to be the source of greed, gain, and exploitation. When we observe Christmas this year, may we truly express the joy of hearts made aware of God's priceless gift of love and salvation.

The proper gift to God would be unselfish, committed service to him in obedience to his command to share the gospel in all of our world. Fortunately, men still see "the star" and dream of bringing Christ to all the world.

Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her king.

—Isaac Watts

Kay is pastor, First, Calhoun City.

By a sweet tongue and kindness,
you can drag an elephant with a hair.—Persian Proverb

Baptist Record

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